

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-02 H-02 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1736

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

KUALA LUMPUR 5447

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

DEA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

CINCPAC HONOLULU

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 4488

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT ON
THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

REF: (A) FBIS BK 180345Z MAR 75 (B) FBIS BK 180355Z MAR 75

(C) BANGKOK 4395 (D) FBIS BK 071731Z MAR 75

SUMMARY: THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT ON FOREIGN
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TROOP WITHDRAWALS APPEARS TO GIVE IT FLEXIBILITY UNDER DIRE

CIRCUMSTANCES TO POSTPONE THE WITHDRAWAL BEYOND THE ONE YEAR DEADLINE, BUT KHUKRIT'S STATEMENTS IN A PRESS CONFERENCE CONTRACT THAT FLEXIBILITY. HE TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE FALL OF THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL. END SUMMARY

1. REFS A AND B REPEAT A "BANGKOK POST" SUMMARY OF THE POLICY STATEMENT WHICH THE KHUKRIT PRAMOT CABINET IS SCHEDULED TO PRESENT TO PARLIAMENT MARCH 19. THIS SUMMARY OMITTS AN IMPORTANT QUALIFYING PHRASE WITH REGARD TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS, HOWEVER. AN UNOFFICIAL EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF THE POLICY STATEMENT'S OPERATIVE SENTENCE ON FOREIGN TROOPS IS: "TO CREATE A BALANCE OF RELATIONS WITH POWERFUL COUNTRIES, THIS GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE MEASURES FOR THE RECOGNITION AND NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS FROM THAILAND WITHIN THE PERIOD OF ONE YEAR, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE SITUATION IN THIS REGION AND FRIENDLY NEGOTIATIONS."

2. THE FINAL PHRASE QUOTED ABOVE APPEARS TO GIVE THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE DEADLINE FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS. IN A MARCH 17 PRESS CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, KHUKRIT SAID: "IF THE SITUATION REMAINS AS IT IS AT PRESENT, IT WILL NOT BE FLEXIBLE AND WITHDRAWALS MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN THE ONE YEAR TIME LIMIT." KHUKRIT ADDED THAT IF WIDESPREAD FIGHTING SHOULD BREAK OUT AND ROCKETS ARE FIRED AT BANGKOK, THEN THE DEADLINE WOULD HAVE TO BE RECONSIDERED.

3. ASKED IF THE FALL OF THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT WOULD CHANGE THE SITUATION, KHUKRIT REPLIED: "I DON'T BELIEVE THAT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT REASON TO HALT THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES. ON THE CONTRARY, IT WOULD BE MORE REASON FOR THEIR WITHDREFAL." KHUKRIT ADDED HIS PERSONAL VIEW THAT LON NOL'S FALL WOULD NOT EXPAND THE WAR INTO THAILAND, SINCE A NEW CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO CONCENTRATE ON RECONSTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY AND REMEDYING INTERNAL PROBLEMS.

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4. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 17 THAT THAILAND MUST NEGOTIATE THE WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN TROOPS WITH THE U.S. AS FRIENDS AND ALLIES. HE SAID: "WE MUST NOT AND WILL NOT CHASE THEM OUT OF OUR COUNTRY. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, WE WILL ENDEAVOR TO OUR UTMOST TO ACHIEVE THE WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY FORCES WITHIN THE TIME LIMIT OF ONE YEAR. BUT WE MUST CONSIDER THE SITUATION IN THIS REGION ALSO, BECAUSE VIOLENT FIGHTING IS

CONTINUING IN CAMBODIA AND NOBODY IS ABLE TO KNOW WHICH WILL BE THE WINNING SIDE."

5. COMMENT: PLACING THE STATEMENT ON FOREIGN TROOPS IN THE SAME SENTENCE WITH RECOGNITION OF THE PRC IS A PARTIAL BOW TO CHATCHAI'S FORMULA FOR WITHDRAWING FOREIGN TROOPS (REF D). CHATCHAI SAID ON MARCH 7 THAT THE RTG MUST FIRST RECOGNIZE THE PRC, THEN SEEK A GUARANTEE OF THAI NEUTRALITY FROM THE U.S., THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE PRC. ONLY AFTER THESE THREE POWERS GUARANTEE THAILAND'S NEUTRALITY WOULD FOREIGN TROOPS BE WITHDRAWN. THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT MAKES NO MENTION OF ASKING FOR A GUARANTEE OF THAI NEUTRALITY, BUT A DELAY IN RECOGNIZING PEKING COULD CONCEIVABLY BECOME A RATIONALE FOR POSTPONING THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES.

6. THE PHRASING OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT AND CHATCHAI'S REMARKS TO THE PRESS ARE SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO PERMIT THE GOVERNMENT TO POSTPONE THE DEADLINE FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS, IF IT DETERMINES THAT A POSTPONEMENT IS IN THAI INTERESTS. KHUKRIT'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRACT THAT FLEXIBILITY, HOWEVER, MOREOVER, OPPOSITION PARTIES, PRESSURE GROUPS, AND ELEMENTS OF THE THAI PRESS THAT HAVE BEEN DEMANDING A RAPID AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES WILL FOCUS ON THE ONE YEAR DEADLINE IN THE POLICY STATEMENT RATHER THAN THE QUALIFYING PHRASES. THEY WILL SURELY EXERT PRESSURE ON THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT TO MEET THAT DEADLINE.

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